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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the photographs and other illustrations from chapters covering subject matter common to seven secondary-level civics textbooks--the Constitution, the federal court system, local government, and economic systems--in order to determine how instructionally relevant they were to teaching and learning the content and concepts that constitute each chapter. A total of 28 chapters containing 257 photographs, 62 charts, and 28 cartoons were examined, with emphasis on the relationship of photographs to content and the presence and effectiveness of photograph captions. It was concluded that a substantial portion of the photographs were poorly selected, did not relate to chapter content in any meaningful way, and were often used as fillers or decoration. References and a list of the textbooks analyzed are provided, and statistical results are presented in four tables. Reproductions of 27 photographs referenced in the text are also included. (KM)

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Photographs in Textbooks: More Than Pretty Pictures?

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, April 1986.

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Photographs in Textbooks: More Than Pretty Pictures?

Introduction

Compare the modern day textbook with those published 40 or more years ago and it is clear that a dramatic change has occured in their layout and design. For while earlier texts contained only a spartan number of photographs and illustrations-- and those mostly black and white line drawings, recent books contain hundreds of four color illustrations and photographs. Compared to their relatively ancient antecendents these recently published textbooks appear to be excellently designed, visually attractive, and carefully written.

But, apart from the positive affect that the cursory reader obtains from a hasty perusal of an illustration-laden text there is evidence that those illustrations serve not so much to enhance and extend the content and learnability of the text, but rather to make it more aesthetically pleasing. Indeed, Woodward (1986) has found that the average secondary school Civics textbook contains relatively little expository text-- that is text from which the reader can learn about the content, concepts, generalizations and modes of inquiry that define a subject. Woodward found as little as 34% of the average Civics textbook was devoted to expository, content-based text, whereas as much as 46% of a textbook was devoted to index, glossary, student activities and the like. Without illustrations only 53% of the average textbook consisted of expository text (range 34% to 76%).

The use of illustrations is a pervasive feature of current textbooks. In the case of Civics textbooks they averaged one page of illustrations per 1.3 content pages. Obviously, illustrations can serve an important instructional purpose in that a chart can summarize the passage of a Bill through Congress, a Table the atomic weights of elements, or a photograph or painting a historical event or an example refered to in the text-- all things that would take an inordinate amount of text to fully explain. For as Levy and Lentz (1982) note in their meta-analysis of 55 experiments of learning from illustrated text there is a correspondence between increased learning when illustrations directly support and extend the text content. In addition, photographs and illustrations can have high motivational appeal, making what might be a dull or difficult topic more interesting (Duchastel, 1978; Duchastel & Waller, 1978). But, given the need to cover large amounts of material in sufficient depth so that students acquire the content and concepts of a discipline and the constraints imposed by the maximum physical length of a textbook on the amount of material that can be covered, to what extent do photographs and illustrations appreciably enhance a book's instructional value? Unfortunately, evidence (some of it anecdotal) suggests that authors and publishers are less than careful in selecting illustrations for their textbooks. Duchastel (1977) has made a strong argument for textbook publishers and instructional designers to adopt an "illustrative strategy which will enhance learning" and notes that *any* strategy will do as long as one is used. Duchastel's appeal is reinforced by researchers who have found that illustrations in textbooks are often poorly conceived and do

nothing to enhance learning. For example, Campbell (1978) and Poage and Poage (1977) found that children's cognitive develpment result in interpretive strategies for illustrations and text that are counter to adult assumptions. In some cases the placement and selection of illustrations may be determined by a marketing department that insists that as many photographs as possible be placed at the edge of text pages so that they can capture the attention of the desultory browser. Sometimes photographs are selected to meet minority representation goals. Thus, photographs might be excluded because they show a woman in a traditional role, whereas those that show a women truck driver or a black, female, handicapped judge will be included.

Clearly, by their sheer number photographs and illustrations appear to be a major instructional feature of elementary and secondary school textbooks. The study reported below analysed only the photographs from chapters common to seven secondary level Civics textbooks-- the Constitution, the Federal Court System, Local Government, and Economic Systems, in order to determine how instructionally relevant they were to teaching and learning the content and concepts that constitut d each topic. The assumption was that photographs could provide a valuable supplement to the written text. But, as is detailed later the results of the analysis were disappointing and it appeared that a substantial portion of the chapter photographs were poorly selected, did not relate to chapter content in any meaningful way, and were often used as "fillers" or "decoration."

Although the use of photographs in textbooks is the major topic of this paper all illustrations found in the 28 chapters were coded and analyzed. Not surprisingly as Table 1 shows, photographs constituted the majority of the visuals (257, 74%). Other illustrations were much less frequently used. For example, there were 62 (18%) charts and diagrams, and 28 (8%) cartoons. It is interesting to note that charts and diagrams often provided important "summaries" of information and processes enabling students to make sense out of involved written descriptions of such topics as the relationship of various Federal Courts to the Supreme Court and to state and local courts. In addition, while charts and diagrams did not include captions discussing the content of the visual (a title was often substituted instead) their organization made them easy to follow. In most cases these charts and diagrams contained additional information that could enhance the chapter content.

The use of cartoons was quite low. Cartoons were avoided by most of the texts, although Textbook C with 16 cartoons and Textbook G with 6 were exceptions. It was clear that in the case of Textbook C cartoons had been carefully selected for their pithy and pointed commentaries on various events and issues. The cartoons in Textbook G seemed to miss the mark in that they only tangentially related to the content being covered in the text.

Insert Table 1 about here

Findings

As Table 1 notes 257 photographs (including photographs of paintings and prints) were identified in the 28 chapters. The number of

photographs ranged from eight in Textbook A to 58 in Textbook B (average 36). Fifty-five percent (140) of all photographs either appeared on the same page or facing page of their accompanying text (Table 2). Few photographs were located overleaf from their text content (14, 5%) and even fewer two or more pages from the relevant content (8, 3%). However, while most photographs were appropriately placed, in the case of 95 (37%) photographs it was impossible to determine how they related to the topics the chapter was covering. For example, it was difficult to see how a photograph of Maynard Jackson who the caption refers to as the "former" mayor of Atlanta GA. had any relevance to the chapter discussion on local government, or how a photograph of an oblique view of a Supreme Court statue related to the topic of the Federal court system. The absence of an accompanying caption usually made identifying and/or relating the photograph to the text impossible. To make a connection was difficult, strained, artificial and often so abstract as to have little bearing on enhancing the understanding of the topic being covered. Unfortunately just under a quarter of the photographs did not have even a simple descriptive caption.

Insert Table 2 about here

Relationship of Photographs to Content: Thirty seven percent of the photographs had no explicit relationship to the text and simply served as "fillers." The remaining photographs although judged to have some instructional merit were quite disappointing; the majority (55%) of photographs were either duplications of content, that is the photographs simply mirrored what had been discussed, or were specific examples of what had been covered (Table 3). Only 33 (13%) photographs were judged to extend the text content by adding new information.

Insert Table 3 about here

Photographs as examples or mirror images of text: The majority of photographs in the 24 chapters were judged to be duplications of content or examples of something mentioned in the text (Table 3). While some of these photgraphs were excellent and served an important instructional purpose, many seemed to reflect simple and well known content. For example, in Textbook D's chapter on economic decision making there were three photographs showing the design, manufacture, and use of bicycles (P. 393). And although the teacher would have to work hard to relate the photographs to the abstract text discussion of economic decision-making the nicely sequenced set of photographs would enable students to apply "real life" knowledge about the production of bicycles to the concept of economic decision making (Example A). A similarly excellent example could be found in two photographs in Textbook F showing "mechanized" farming in the days of horse power and today (Example B). In the case of both examples these photographs provided a vehicle that could help the teacher more fully explain difficult concepts and help students relate these concepts to their experiences in the present and see their present and thus understand it better by contrasting it to the past.

In a sense these photographs were "complex" or "dense" in that they contained a wealth of detail and color that could help teachers and students visualize and better understand the content and concepts of the text. In addition, these "good" examples were often series or pairs of photographs thus encouraging comparison. However, not all complex photographs were equally instructive. For example, in Textbook D's chapter on the jurisdiction of federal courts the photograph (Example C, P. 164)) showed two unidentified ships and a tug approaching a city. The caption reads "Federal courts may hear cases involving ships on the open sea or along the coastal waters of the United States. This Russian ship is shown being taken into custody." In its discussion of court jurisdiction no reference is made to the example shown in the photograph and so students would have no idea why the ship is being escourted into habor.

Many photographs could be categorized as simple "portraits". These portraits ranged from the posed "action" photograph that supposedly illustrated a concept to the traditional portrait of a person. In Textbook F (P. 479) the photograph was supposed to illustrate the effects of technology and computers on increasing productivity. However, the photograph of two people looking at a computer tape in what appeared to be a computer room seemed inadequate to illustrate such a complex concept (Example D).

Most portrait photographs were either pictures of characters mentioned in the text such as Alexander Hamilton and James Madison (P. 42) in Textbook B's chapter on the Constitution (Example E), Judge Constance Motley as an example of a Federal Judge in Textbook D (P. 173, Example F), or Textbook E's photograph of the County Executive of Nassau County, New York (P. 199, Example G).

The use of portrait photographs to illustrate something mentioned in the text was often problematic. In many cases it seemed that these portraits were addressing social rather than instructional issues. Even the inclusion of numerous minority and women portraits was problematic for in a number of cases photographs were taken of judges without the paraphrenalia that would suggest their role. In other photographs the inclusion of Constance Motley in three texts and "former" Mayor Maynard Jackson in another suggested that publishers had been less than careful in selecting appropriate photographs.

It is hard for the objective reader to see the instructional purpose of portrait photographs-- to see how the inclusion of such photographs enhances the student's understanding of a topic. As can be seen in Example O a group portrait of the Supreme Court Justices is at least helpful because it is placed within a context of descriptions of Supreme Court decisions and is taken in an elegant and appropriate setting. Such could not be said for other photographs.

Photographs not explicity related to the text: Over a third of the photographs in the Civics textbook chapters were judged to have no explicit relationship to the text content (Table 3). In Textbook B's chapter on the Constitution there were 14 unrelated pictures and prints of people and scenes from that period. These included Brigadier General and Mrs. Thomas Mifflin, the New Haven Public Square, "Night life in Philadelphia", and a print of Indians boating

past a newly cleared farm (the caption states, "Note the stumps and log fences"). These 14 photographs and prints potentially could have provided important background and supplementary information. Indeed, some of the illustrations were interesting and compelling. But, it was clear that these photographs had no relationship to one another and only related to the text in that they were from the same period. In the same textbook a chapter on local government contains a photograph of the USS Constellation berthed in Baltimore's harbor (P. 588). The caption states "Berthed in Baltimore's new Inner Harbor area is the USS Constellation, the first ship in the United States Navy and a major tourist attaction." Nowhere in the chapter is there any discussion of urban renewal or how different cities attempt to bring new revenue into their area (Example H).

A connection to textbook content is also difficult to find in the case of Textbook D's photograph of the Houston Opera House in its section on city government (p. 277). As Example I shows all one sees is a photograph of people in an auditorium reading program notes. The caption reads, "The Houston Opera House is an important part of city life." There is no indication in the text whether local governments run or subsidize such facilities or of the special qualities of life that cities can offer their inhabitants. A similar example of the gratuitous inclusion of a photograph can be found in Textbook E's chapter on local government which shows the Santa Barbra County Court House and whose caption asks, "How does the architecture of this building reflect the West coast region of the country?" (Exmple J, P. 200). And in Textbook B's chapter explaining supply and demand in market economics the authors use a familiar example of how hamburgers are priced to illustrate the concept. However, the accompanying photograph (p. 430, Example K) which on first inspection appears to provide a good example of supply and demand at work at a cattle auction is accompanied by a caption that notes that the auction is for dairy cows!

Photographs extending the text: Only 33 of 257 photographs (13%) were judged to extend the text, that is to provide additional information that would enable students to learn more about a topic or concept from the photographs. An excellent example of using photographs in this way was in Textbook G's (P. 16) juxtaposition of two photographs showing the effects of communist and capitalist economic systems on the supply of goods. As can be seen in Example L one photograph shows long lines at a meat market in Poland and the other the abundance of meat in a New York supermarket.

Several other photographs also show how photographs can extend the text. In Textbook B we see a real life court scene in which action is taking place (P. 209, Example M) in contrast to the many posed courtroom scenes, drawings, mock student trials, and portraits of judges that can usually be found in chapters dealing with the court system. Several pages (P. 220-201) later a group of four photographs illustrate the Supreme Court. Two of these photographs, one showing a large mailbag holding one day's business for a Justice and another a conference in Justice Rehnquist's chambers provide information about the working of the court that is not covered in the text (Example N). In contrast to formal photographs of the Justices we see a Justice in action "behind the scenes" and so begin to get a sense that the Supreme Court is more than an imposing building. However, the two remaining photographs show an empty courtroom and a posed picture of

the nine Justices (Example O). Although these latter photographs are not exciting nor particularly instructive they represent a nice juxtaposition with the other photographs. The cummulative effect is a series of images of the Supreme Court showing both its formal and working aspects.

Historical photographs were especially effective in enhancing the text. In a discussion of the stock market crash and the Great Depression (Textbook D, P. 406) two photographs, one of two contemporary headlines reading "Worst stock crash stemmed by banks: 12,894,650-share day swamps market; leaders confer, find conditions sound" and the other "Stock prices slump $14,000,000,000 in nation-wide stampede to unload; Bankers to support market today" is nicely juxtaposed by a photograph of foodlines (Example P).

The Missed Opportunity: While the textbooks contained a number of photographs that could be used to extend instruction and learning there were several photographs that were potentially excellent but that fell sort of the mark. For example, Textbook G's chapter on local government contained a photograph of a small house surrounded by a building (probably a hotel) under construction in Atlanic City, NJ. (P. 594, Example Q). Unfortunately, although the photograph is eye catching it only marginally related to the brief section of the text covering zoning. Indeed, the caption refers to a note on the following page that seems to have nothing to do with the photograph. The note reads "However, nonconforming uses in existence *before* a zoning ordinance is passed are almost always allowed to continue. And most ordinances give the city council the right to grant exceptions (variances) in cases where property owners might suffer undue hardship. (P. 595)". Given the right circumstances this photograph could have been a powerful instructional device.

In Textbook A (P. 339) the authors discuss the role of automation in economic and industrial development and use four photographs-- a horse and rider, steam locomotive, early airplane, and a space rocket (Example R) to illustrate their point. Unfortunately, the connection between the discussion of automation and the photographs is weak. The caption asks "Which of the (transportation inventions) is most likely to be automatic? How have they changed the economy?" It is hard to see looking at a photograph of a primitive plane or the one of space rocket how they have changed the economy. A horse drawn wagon, a truck, a factory robot, and a computer might have been better choices. Clearly, the question is impossible to answer given the existing selection of photographs.

A final example from Textbook B (P. 225) shows a photograph of an overcrowded and dilapidated classroom attended by black children in a "case study" of Brown v. Board of Education (Example S). The caption reads "Black children had to attend separate schools from whites." Omitted is the key word *unequal*. How effective this photograph would have been if accompanied by one of a white classroom.

The Captionless Photograph: Without a caption to indicate the relationship of the photograph to the text, captionless photographs had little instructional purpose. Almost a quarter of all photographs had no caption (Table 4).

Insert Table 4 about here

The absence of a caption made it especially difficult to understand what the series of three photographs were at the beginning of Textbook D's chapter on the Constitution (Example T). Similar difficulty was encountered with Textbook C's (P. 230) photograph of a court building (one inferred it was the Supreme Court Building, Example U), and Textbook B's photograph of a harvesting scene (P. 365) in a chapter on county government. The only reference in the text that might link the picture was "Farming is likely to be a chief source of income in many of the Franklin counties." (Example V).

Captions: As Table 4 shows that while almost a quarter of all photographs had no caption, the remaining photographs contained captions that were judged to be paraphrases or mirror images of the text (59, 23%), just over a quarter presented additional information or examples and 21% were simple descriptions of the photograph such as "A sewage treatment plant" or "A Federal Judge." One notable example of paraphrase/mirroring was in Textbook D's section on the Constitution and described the President's perogative to send help to states suffering natural disasters (P. 50). After exactly stating what was written in the text, "Presidents have often sent soldiers and equipment into a state that has suffered a natural disaster" the caption mentioned that the photograph is of soldiers sent to help with the Mt. St. Helens disaster. Unfortunately, the photograph of a helicopter with a red cross on its side being hosed down by what appear to be firemen seems oddly out of place. In addition, the photograph is of a very flat area that for non-Washington state residents hardly represents our image of that area (Example W).

The Unclear Caption: Although not a major problem it was surprising to find that in a number of cases (15, 6%) the caption was unclear or simply inappropriate for the photograph it accompanied. These fifteen captions were so discordant that one wondered whether the writer had actually seen the photograph. Below a photograph of a jet flying over what seemed to be a pedestrian bridge on which young people were sitting and standing (Textbook C, P. 94) the caption read, "This kind of noise pollution was not a problem in 1776." Although the photograph is in a section called "A Living Constitution" nothing in the text indicates how noise pollution has changed our notion of the Constitution (Example X). In a photograph of a young man looking at records the caption states "How can this customer show that he repects the rights of the record shop owner" (Textbook C, P. 89, Example Y). In Textbook B the following caption accompanied a murky picture of a large room, "A Justice explains the role of the Court in one of two public conference rooms" (Example X).

Captions Presenting Additional Information: Sixty six (26%) captions were judged as providing additional information. For example, Textbook B's discussion of the problems of post revolutionary war U.S. mentioned that no national currency existed and showed four photographs of different state's currency (P. 40) and the caption, "The states printed their own money; Virginia three pound note, 1775;

New York bills for one-sixth of a dollar, 1776..." Textbook F's chapter on economic systems showed a photograph of a senior citizens home with the following caption, "In countries like Sweden, a modified socialist plan calls for heavy taxation in order to provide social and welfare services such as care for the elderly.(P. 483)". And in Textbook D (P. 165) in a section on customs agents and federal court jurisdiction the caption reads, "It is against federal law to smuggle drugs into the United States. These customs agents are examining containers in which they found drugs." (Example AA).

Conclusion

Looking at the photographs in the seven Civics textbooks one question came to mind; what are the purpose of photographs in textbooks? The answer, of course, should be obvious. They are there to support, carry, extend, and illustrate the text so that teachers can teach more effectively and students understand and integrate what has been taught to them. Unfortunately, what should be the primary function of photographs seems to be the least important. Few photographs actually extend the text or help "explain" it. Most photographs, while very colorful and interesting had no clear instructional purpose. These photographs were fillers that only tangentially related to the topic being covered in the text. In a sense I was reminded of the evening news produced by one of the major television networks. The pictures were mesmerizing, colorful, and attractive and somehow seemed to compensate for shallowness of the news reports. On the whole the treatment of civics content in the textbooks was similarly shallow. The presence of so many photographs, as much as one page of photographs and illustrations for one and a half pages of text, automatically meant that authors had relatively little space in which to cover the hundreds of topics that constitute Civics.

In recent years there has been a growing demand for higher quality textbooks. However, until educators select textbooks on the basis of their instructional design, quality of scholarship, and their ability to challenge students and not because they are attractively packaged then few changes can be expected. It seems remarkable that photographs in textbooks have been seen as nonproblematic. Photographs can be a litmus test of how carefully textbooks have been written and designed. Yet the fact that photographs are often so inappropriate and are still considered nonproblematic is disturbing and reflects poorly on the professonalism and skill educators bring to the crucially important task of evaluating and selecting instructional materials

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Table 3

Relationship of photographs to text content

Textbook	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Tot.	%
Example/ Duplication of content	6	24	24	24	12	38	13	141	55%
Not explictly related	1	25	11	16	8	17	17	95	37%
Extension	1	9	4	3	2	1	13	33	13%

Total Number of photographs: 257

Table 4

Relationship of captions to photographs

Textbook	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Tot.	%
None	0	9	17	13	0	16	6	61	24%
Duplication/ Paraphrase of text	6	9	1	14	0	26	3	59	23%
Presents addnl information/ examples	0	16	4	10	6	10	20	66	26%
Simple description	1	24	7	0	13	3	5	53	21%
Questions	8	1	5	2	17	0	0	33	13%
Not explicitly related	0	1	3	4	0	0	7	15	6%

Table 1

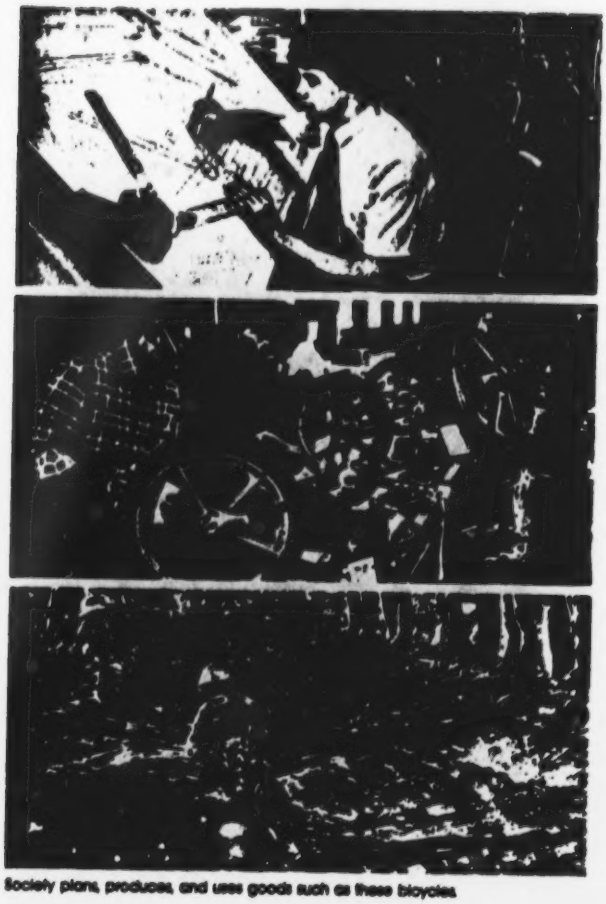
Number Illustrations in Textbooks

Textbook	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	All	Ave.
# illustrations (total)	16	70	55	52	21	67	65	346	49
# photographs/ paintings/prints	8	58	32	39	20	56	42	257	74%
Diagrams/charts	6	10	7	12	0	11	16	62	18%
Cartoons	2	2	16	1	1	0	6	28	8%

Table 2

Location of Photographs

Textbook	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Tot.	%
Same/facing page of content	8	25	24	21	13	33	16	140	55%
1 page overleaf from content	0	5	0	4	1	3	1	14	5%
2+ pages from content	0	1	0	1	1	1	4	8	3%
Not explicitly related	0	27	10	15	4	18	21	95	37%

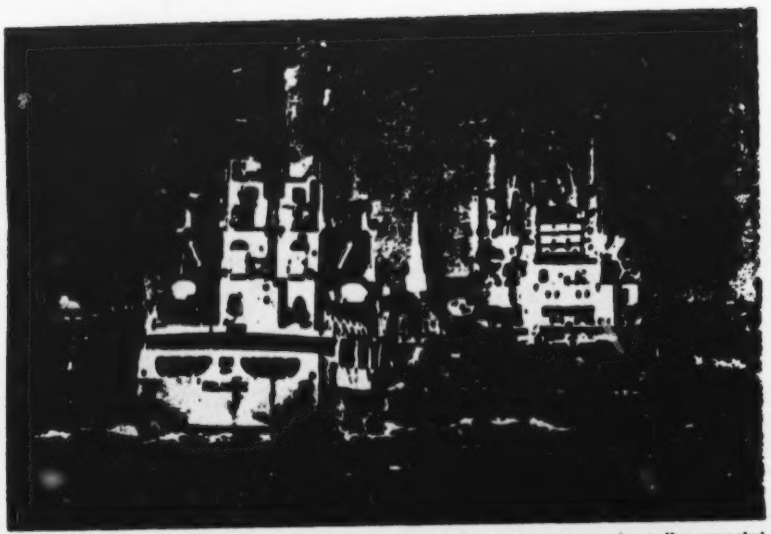


Society plans, produces, and uses goods such as these bicycles.

EXAMPLE A

EXAMPLE B

Improvements in technology since the days of the horse and plow have made it possible for American farmers to produce ever increasing amounts of food. Due to these improvements, farming has become a highly specialized branch of business.

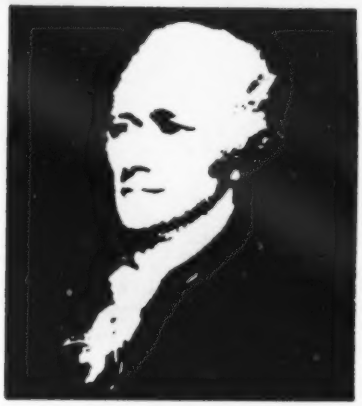


Federal courts may hear cases involving ships on the open sea or along the coastal waters of the United States. This Russian ship is shown being taken into custody.

EXAMPLE C

EXAMPLE D

Alexander Hamilton (top) and
James Madison (bottom).



EXAMPLE E

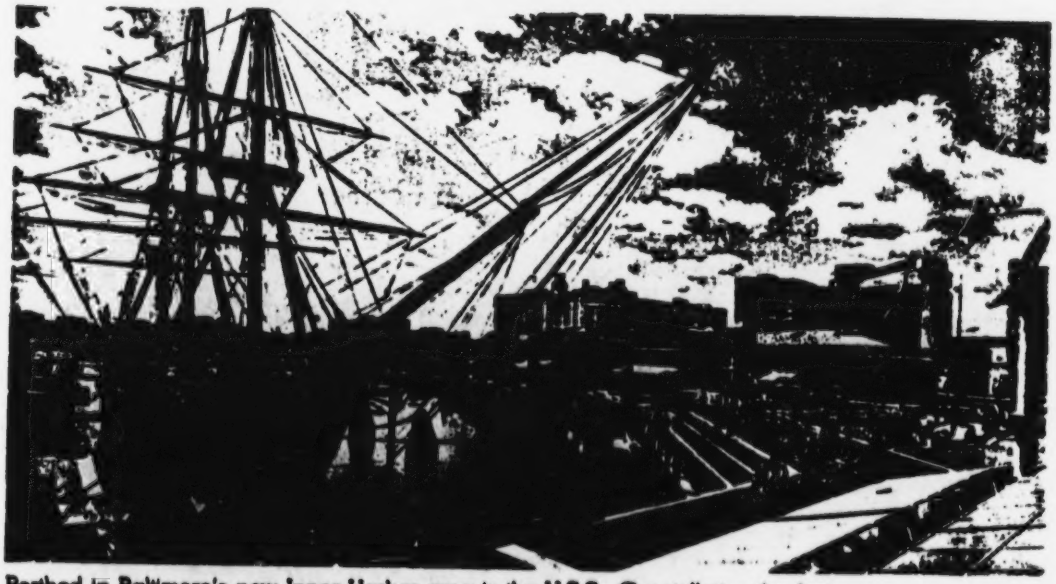
Constance Baker Motley, a judge of the U.S. district court in New York.

EXAMPLE F

Francis T. Purcell, County Executive for Nassau County in New York.

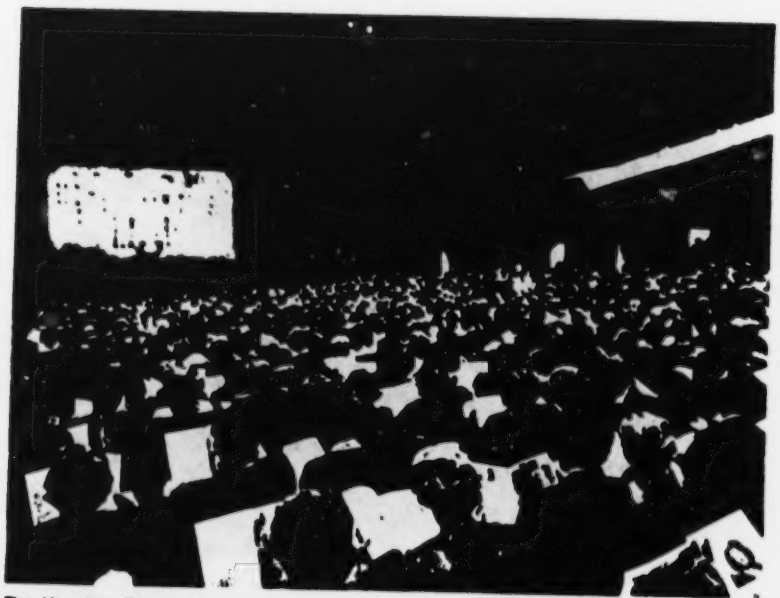
EXAMPLE G

EXAMPLE H



Berthed in Baltimore's new Inner Harbor area is the U.S.S. *Constellation*, the first ship in the United States Navy and a major tourist attraction.

EXAMPLE I



The Houston Opera House is an important part of Texas city life.

EXAMPLE J

County Court House, Santa Barbara, California. How does the architecture of this building reflect the West Coast region of the country?

4 An auction of dairy cows at the Kansas City stockyards. In the foreground is the auctioneer.

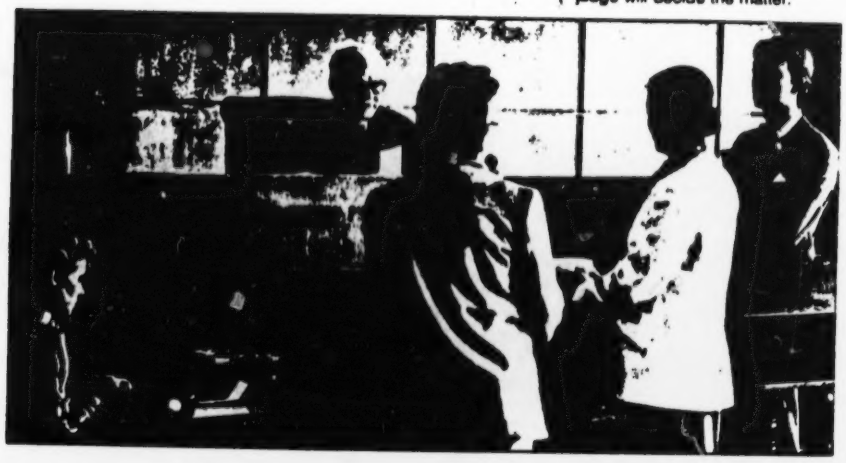
EXAMPLE K

EXAMPLE L

The particular shape of a nation's economic system has very real and very profound effects upon the shape of everyone's daily life. At left: Customers wait for a government-run meat market to open in Soviet-dominated Poland. Right: A meat counter in a privately-owned supermarket in New York.

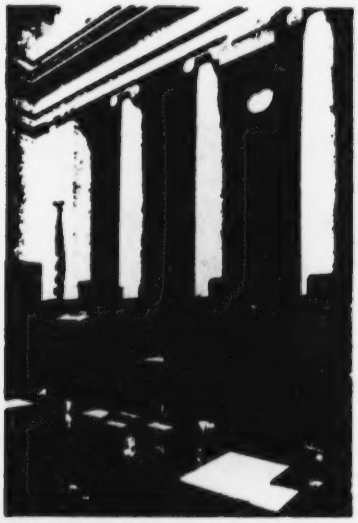
EXAMPLE M

Lawyers argue whether or not a piece of evidence is admissible. The court reporter on the left keeps a record of all proceedings. The judge will decide the matter.



A mailbag holding one day's worth of business waits for a Justice in his office.

EXAMPLE N



(Above) the courtroom where the Justices hear arguments and issue opinions, (left) in conference, and (below) the nine Justices in the Court's east conference room.

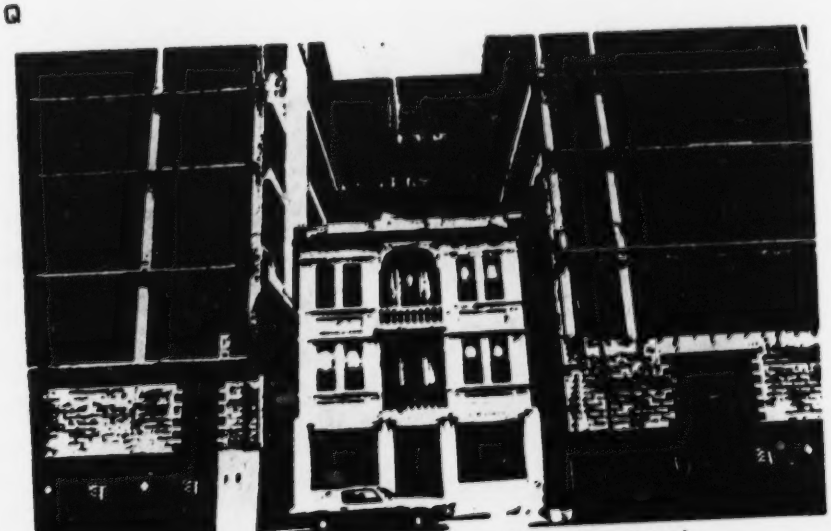
EXAMPLE O

EXAMPLE P

WORST STOCK CRASH STEMMED BY BANKS
12,894,650-SHARE DAY SWAMPS MARKET
LEADERS CONFER, FIND CONDITIONS SOUN
TWO CENTS
TURBED STOCK PRICES SLUMP $14,000,000,000
ACTION IN NATION-WIDE STAMPEDE TO UNLOAD;
DEBT BANKERS TO SUPPORT MARKET TODAY
The New York Times.

During the Great Depression many people had to stand in line for food.

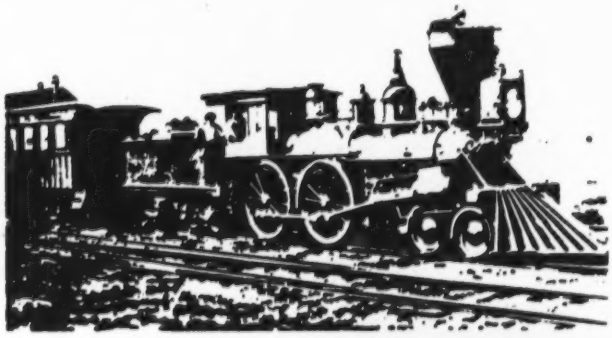
EXAMPLE Q

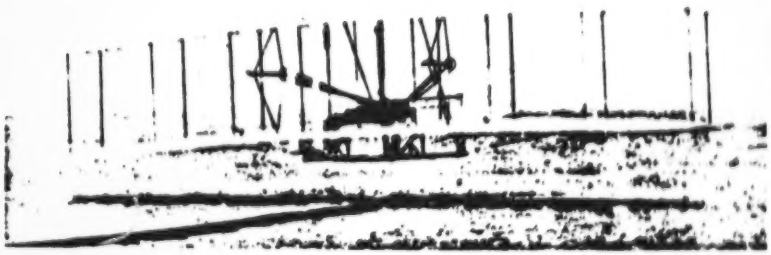


A single-family dwelling has escaped destruction as a new building is constructed around it in Atlantic City, New Jersey. (See note 14, page 595.)

EXAMPLE R

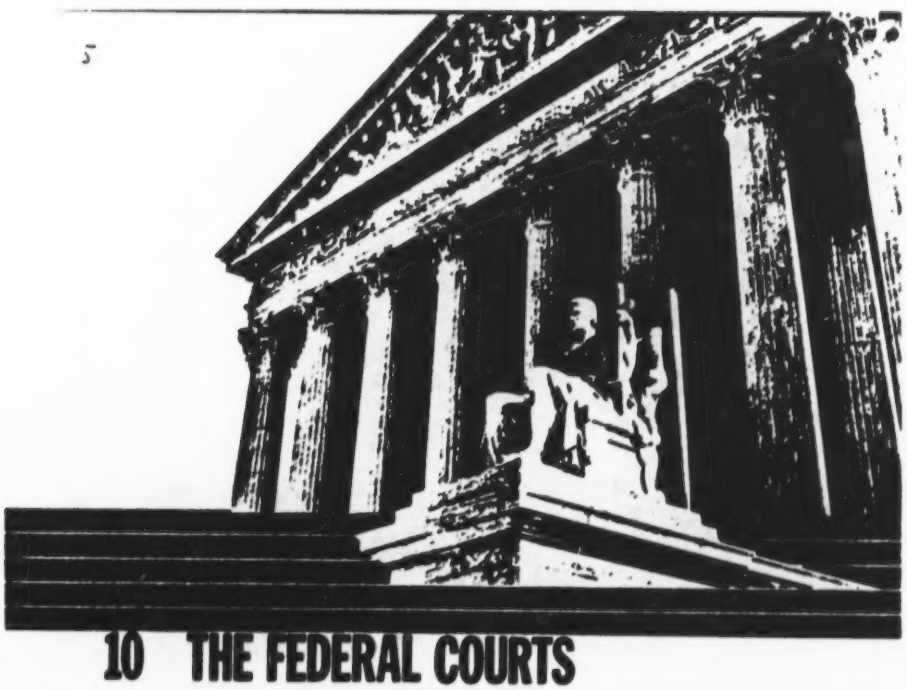
The United States has witnessed many inventions in transportation. Which of these is most likely to be automatic? How have they changed our economy?





EXAMPLE S

EXAMPLE T



EXAMPLE U

EXAMPLE V

Presidents have often sent soldiers and equipment into a state that has suffered a natural disaster. These soldiers were sent to Mt. St. Helens in the state of Washington.

EXAMPLE W

EXAMPLE X

A Living Constitution

How can this customer show that he respects the rights of the record shop owner?

EXAMPLE Y

A Justice explains the role of the Court in one of two public conference rooms.

EXAMPLE Z

EXAMPLE AA

It is against federal law to smuggle drugs into the United States. These customs agents are examining containers in which they found drugs.